AGENDA

Environmental Performance Committee Meeting

Date:	**Tuesday, 9 June 2026**
Time:	**9.30 AM**
Location:	**Council Chambers** **Waikato Regional Council** **Level 1, 160 Ward Street, Hamilton**
Members:	Cr Kataraina Hodge –Chair Cr Gary McGuire –Deputy-Chair Cr Robert Cookson Cr Ben Dunbar-Smith Cr Keith Holmes Cr Warren Maher Cr Jennifer Nickel Cr Liz Stolwyk
Alternates:	Cr Mich'eal Downard (alternate for the Chair of Council)

Environmental Performance Committee

Ngā Tikanga Whakahaere **| Terms of Reference**

1. *Mana ā-Ture* **| Status**
   This Committee was created by Council pursuant to clause 30(1)(a) of Schedule 7 of the Local Government Act 2002. It is a discretionary committee of Council. It was established, and can be disestablished, by resolution of Council.

2. *Kawenga* **| Responsibilities**
   This Committee is responsible for:
   a. Oversight of the Region's information gathering, monitoring and reporting on the state of the environment.
   b. Overseeing the effectiveness of and compliance with Council's regulatory responsibilities including:
      i. Monitoring the effectiveness of Council's Resource Management Act, navigation safety by-law and Building Act implementation responsibilities.
      ii. Considering emerging environmental issues relating to environmental and regulatory monitoring and performance matters and providing advice on the implications for effective resource management in the region.
      iii. Receiving information on the state of the environment monitoring, and to direct the use of this information to inform policy review.
      iv. Receiving information on regional plan and coastal plan implementation, in particular the implementation of Plan Change 1 and national regulations in relation to Freshwater farm plans.
      v. Receiving the reports of resource consent hearing committee decisions as constituted under the Resource Management Act.
   c. Reporting how our activities are giving effect to Te Ture Whaimana o Te Awa o Waikato.

3. *Ngā Apatono* **| Powers**
   The Committee has the following powers required to carry out its responsibilities:
   a. Receiving regular monitoring reports and presentations on the matters relating to the Committee's responsibilities.
   b. Receiving the reports of resource consent hearing committee decisions.
   c. Receiving the reports on the establishment of resource consent hearing committees.
   d. Making recommendations to the Strategy and Policy Committee in respect of emerging environmental issues on matters relating to the Committee's responsibilities.
   e. Making recommendations on any changes required to improve the effectiveness of Council's planning and regulatory tools, activities and suasive programmes relating to the Committee's responsibilities.

4. *Ngā Tūranga* **| Membership**

   4.1 *Ngā Mema* **/ Members**
   The Committee has eight members as follows:
   a. Seven councillors appointed by Council
   b. Chair of Council

   4.2 *Ngā Kairīwhi* **| Alternates**
   The Deputy-Chair of Council is the alternate for the Chair of Council on this Committee, unless otherwise appointed.

   4.3 *Ūpoko me te Ūpoko Tuarua* **| Chair and Deputy-Chair**
   The Chair and Deputy-Chair are appointed by Council in accordance with clause 25 of Schedule 7 of the Local Government Act 2002.

5. **Tokamatua / Quorum**
   Two (refer clause 23(3)(b) Schedule 7 Local Government Act 2002).

6. *Ngā Tikanga Pōti* **| Voting**
   Decisions of the Committee are made by majority vote of members present and voting. In the case of equality of votes, the Chair has a deliberative and casting vote. Refer to clause 24 of Schedule 7 of the Local Government Act and *Standing Orders.*

7. *Ngā Hui i te Tau* **| Frequency of meetings**
   Quarterly or as required.

Order Of Business

1 KARAKIA TIMATANGA

Whakataka te hau ki te uru	**Cease o winds from the west**
Whakataka te hau ki te tonga	**Cease o winds from the south**
Kia mākinakina ki uta	**Bring calm breezes over the land**
Kia mātaratara ki tai	**Bring calm breezes over the sea**
E hī ake ana te atakura	**And let the red-tipped dawn come**
He tio	**With a touch of frost**
He Huka	**A sharpened air**
He hau hū	**And promise of a glorious day**
Tīhei mauri ora!	**Behold we live**

2 APOLOGIES

3 CONFIRMATION OF AGENDA

4 DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

Members are reminded of the need to be aware of maintaining a clear separation between personal interests and duties and their role as an elected member.

If any member has an interest that creates an actual, or could be perceived to create, a conflict in relation to any item on the agenda, it is recommended that this be disclosed.

5 MINUTES FOR CONFIRMATION OR RECEIPT

Nil

6 GENERAL ITEMS

6.1 RESOURCE USE DIRECTORATE - COST OF ACTIVITIES

Rā | Date: **28 May 2026**

Kaituhi | Author: **Brent Sinclair, Director, Resource Use**

Kaituku | Authoriser: **Brent Sinclair, Director, Resource Use**

TE ARONGA | PURPOSE

1. This report meets a council requirement to provide each of the council's standing committees with an overview of current activities, their purpose and cost of delivery to help inform 2027-2037 Long Term Plan discussions.

KŌRERO WHAKATAKI | EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2. One of the Chief Executive's key performance indicators (KPIs) includes the requirement to provide information to councillors to help inform the 2027-2037 Long Term Plan (LTP) decisions by reporting an overview of current activities, their purpose and cost of delivery to all council standing committees within their terms of reference. The intention is to ensure committees understand the investment or disinvestment decisions they wish to pursue as they develop the LTP.
3. The Environmental Performance Committee has key responsibility for;
    i. Oversight of the Region's information gathering, monitoring and reporting on the state of the environment
    ii. Overseeing the effectiveness of and compliance with Council's regulatory responsibilities
4. The first of these matters is delivered by our Science and Information (SPI) Directorate and will be addressed in a separate report prepared by the SPI Director (along with other aspects of the SPI Directorate work programme) to the Strategy and Policy Committee.
5. This report provides detail and commentary on the work programme of the Resource Use Directorate (RUD).
6. This report details budgeted labour and direct costs for each of the five "Groups of Activity" (GOAs), for which the primary responsibility for delivery sits within RUD.

TAUNAKITANGA KAIMAHI | STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

That the report *Resource Use Directorate - cost of activities* (Environmental Performance Committee, 9 June 2026) be received.

HOROPAKI | BACKGROUND

7. One of the Chief Executive's key performance indicators (KPIs) includes the requirement to provide information to councillors to help inform the 2027-2037 Long Term Plan (LTP) decisions by reporting an overview of current activities, their purpose and cost of delivery to all council standing committees within their terms of reference. The intention is to ensure committees understand the investment or disinvestment decisions they wish to pursue as they develop the LTP.

8. This report provides detail and commentary on the work programme of the Resource Use Directorate (RUD), which has the primary responsibility for delivering Council's regulatory functions.

TE TAKE | ISSUE

9. As noted above, the Resource Use Directorate leads the delivery of Council's work programme as it relates to five groups of activity (GOAs).

Regional Consent Processing

10. WRC is responsible for receiving and processing resource consent applications under the Resouorce Management Act (and successor legislation), as well as providing input into the Fast Track Approvals Act processes that are administered by the EPA, for the purpose of enabling the sustainable use of the region's natural resources. WRC is also responsible for processing consent applications for large dams under the Building Act on behalf of all North Island regional councils and unitary authorities.

Regional Compliance Monitoring

11. WRC is required to monitor compliance with resource consents, rules in council's plans and other national instruments such as National Environmental Standards. WRC also provides a 24/7 365 day per year service responding to notifications from members of the public about environmental incidents.

A range of tools are used, both regulatory and non-regulatory, to encourage positive behaviour change. Serious breaches are formally investigated so well-informed decisions can be made, including where appropriate to initiate enforcement action.

Maritime Services

12. The purpose of this programme is to maintain safe and navigable waters in order to keep people safe on the water, both in the coastal and inland environment. We look to ensure that the maritime regulations are well promoted and adhered to, with a strong focus on education. We manage moorings, approve maritime events on the water and WRC also has Harbourmaster responsibilities at the Port of Taharoa.

Community Education

13. The education work programme is one of Council's key front-end levers. It supports people across the Waikato to make good, sustainable decisions about the environment through place-based learning and strong partnerships. Programmes such as Enviroschools, Kura Waitii ki Kura Waitaa, youth engagement and waste prevention build environmental capability and leadership in schools, kura, territorial authorities and communities. This work reduces pressure on downstream regulatory tools and helps shape informed decision-makers and actions for today and for the longer term. These work programmes are done at scale, delivered regionally (cross regionally in the case of waste prevention).

Primary Industry Engagement

14. This work programme is about supporting the primary sector to understand and meet its regulatory obligations and to promote best practice. It also is responsible for implementing a number of obligations that sit with Council that are included within Councils' planning documents, including Plan Change 1 as they relate to Farm Environment Plans, as well as national regulations with a particular focus on Freshwater Farm Plans.

Summary

15. Most of the services provided by the directorate are required under legislation. Collectively as a whole the programmes support Council's strategic direction as it relates to the sustainable use of natural resources. This involves the use of the full spectrum of suasive tools, from engagement & education through to compliance & enforcement.

16. Staffing resources, reflected as budgeted Full Time Equivalents (FTEs) across each work area in the 2025/26 Annual Plan, are as follows;

Regional Consents	51.9
Regional Compliance	37.2
Maritime Services	12.3
Primary Industry Engagement	11.8
Community Education	5.3
Business Support/Consent Administration Services	8
Director	2.5
TOTAL FTE	**129**

17. A recent re-structure has seen all compliance functions now sitting within the Regional Compliance Section. This has seen the two consent compliance monitoring teams move from the Regional Consents section to the Regional Compliance section, and as such the Compliance Section is now 54 FTE and the Consents Section 35 FTE.

18. In addition to the above, there are 14 budgeted FTE within the Civil Defence & Emergency Management group (CDEM) who are also part of the Resource Use Directorate. However, funding of activities within CDEM is not part of this report as these functions are not overseen by the Environment Performance Committee.

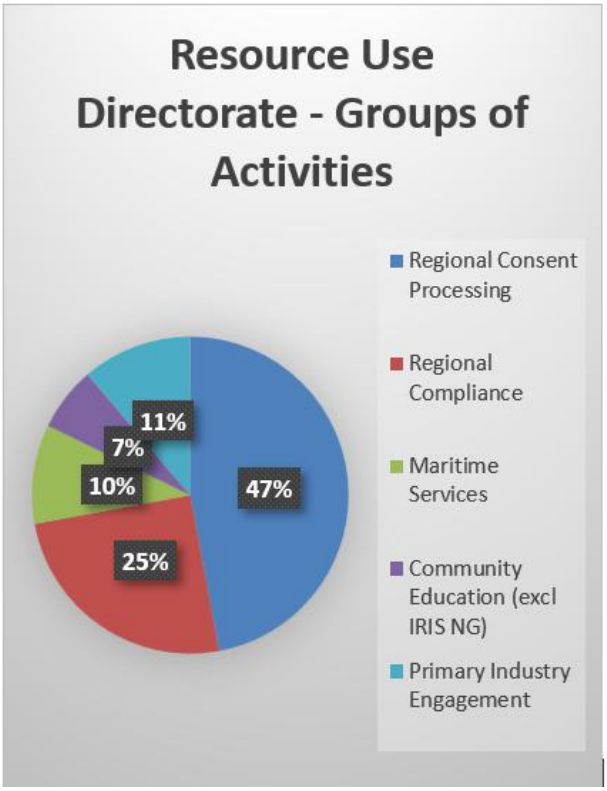
19. Furthermore, a number of contractors (and fixed term employees) are engaged to support delivery of the work programmes (including the IRIS Next Gen project), or to

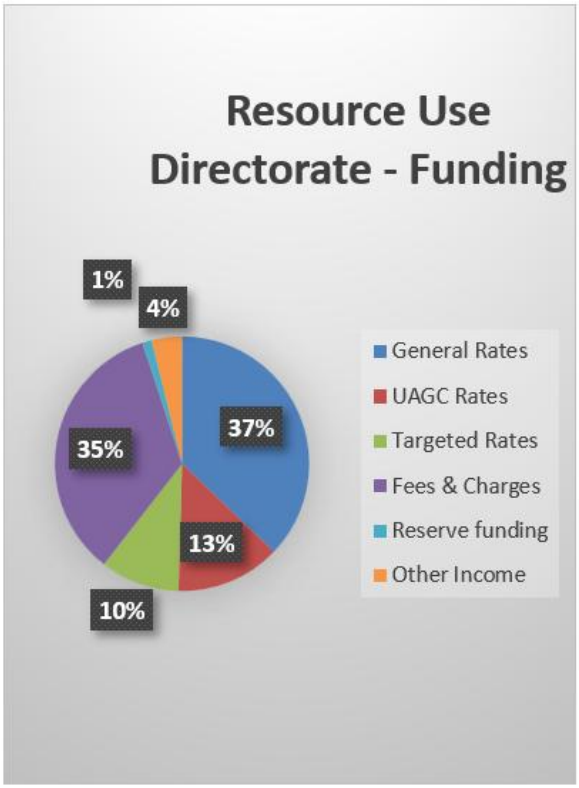
provide expert assistance where that expertise does not already reside within other Directorates of Council. The delivery of the consenting and compliance functions relies heavily on expertise provided by teams in our SPI and ICM Directorates, and the delivery of our Enviroschools and Kura Waitii ki Kura Waitaa programmes is via contract to external providers.

20. It is appropriate to note that, pursuant to Council's funding policy, the cost of delivering Council's consent processing and consent monitoring services is funded 80/20 between user charges and the general rate. Historically this split was 70/30 but transitioned to the current policy a number of years ago.

21. Additionally, in the past there was no ability under the RMA to directly charge for monitoring of permitted activities – hence the establishment of the permitted activity monitoring rate. Recent legislative changes now provide the opportunity to directly charge for elements of this activity and other compliance monitoring and enforcement activities. As part of the upcoming LTP process, staff will bring forward recommended changes to Council's funding policy to reflect this legislative change. An anticipated outcome being the reduction in the permitted activity rate, with more costs being funded via user charges.

22. The current cost of service (based on the approved 2025/26 annual plan) and associated funding sources for each activity is provided in the table on the following page. The distribution of spending/funding sources across the Directorate work programmes is provided in the charts below.





How activities are funded

Total costs and funding sources for each GOA are as follows:

	Annual Plan ($000)				Funded by					
	Labour	**Direct Costs**	**Total (incl. overheads)**		**Fees & Charges**	**General rate**	**UAGC**	**Targeted rates**	**Other Income**	**Loan**
Group of Activities: Regional Consents	**4,951,656**	**2,604,780**	**13,327,732**		**9,628,424**	**3,699,308**	**-**	**-**	**-**	
Consent Processing and compliance monitoring	4,354,322	2,392,500	11,798,002		9,341,605	2,456,397	-	-	-	
Information and Advice	441,126	-	991,274		-	991,274	-	-	-	
Dam Safety	118,890	111,580	358,554		286,819	71,735	-	-	-	
Appeals	37,318	100,700	179,902		-	179,902	-	-	-	
Group of Activities: Regional Compliance	**3,051,571**	**511,089**	**7,076,210**		**25,000**	**4,630,109**	**-**	**1,948,371**	**472,731**	
Incident Response	1,198,505	185,181	2,770,167		25,000	2,745,167	-	-	-	
Permitted Activity Monitoring	1,099,080	115,333	2,464,410		-	487,093	-	1,948,371	28,947	
Investigations	753,986	210,575	1,841,633		-	1,397,849	-	-	443,784	

	Labour	Direct Costs	Total (incl. overheads)		Fees & Charges	General rate	UAGC	Targeted rates	Other Income	Loan
Group of Activities: Maritime services	**1,086,722**	**535,468**	**2,865,619**		**110,000**	**-**	**2,719,619**	**-**	**36,000**	
Group of Activities: Community Education	**389,892**	**4,161,836**	**5,494,407**		**-**	**1,073,800**	**1,045,042**	**-**	**347,000**	**2,995,373**
Formal Education	292,996	645,708	1,392,042		-	-	1,045,042	-	347,000	
Waste	84,928	183,095	432,225		-	399,033	-	-		
Airsheds	11,968	35,340	65,873		-	65,873	-	-	-	
IRIS NG	-	3,297,693	3,604,267		-	608,894	-	-	-	2,995,373
Group of Activities: PIE	**1,149,839**	**817,004**	**3,174,845**			**1,717,095**	**-**	**1,245,750**	**212,000**	
RUD GOA TOTAL	**10,629,680**	**8,630,177**	**31,938,813**	**-**	**9,763,424**	**11,120,312**	**3,764,661**	**3,194,121**	**1,067,731**	**2,995,373**

WHAKAKAPINGA | CONCLUSION

23. This report presents an overview of current activities, their purpose and cost of delivery of projects implemented by the Resource Use Directorate of Council. These activities have been, by and large, "business as usual" (BAU) for Council for many years and so this Committee will be well familiar with them as they are subject to routine reports to the EPC.

24. The council will be discussing where to maintain, increase, or disinvest in council activities through the development the 2027–2037 Long Term Plan. This paper provides opportunity for the EPC to seek any further clarity it requires on the above activities to support the upcoming LTP process.

ĀPITIHANGA | ATTACHMENTS

Nil

6.2 MARITIME SERVICES UPDATE

Rā | Date: **28 May 2026**

Kaituhi | Author: **Chris Bredenbeck, Regional Harbourmaster**

Kaituku | Authoriser: **Brent Sinclair, Director, Resource Use**

TE ARONGA | PURPOSE

1. The purpose of this report is to provide the Environmental Performance Committee with an overview of the Maritime Services seasonal Operation Neptune, the ongoing "War on Wrecks" project, our response to significant weather events, and the implementation of the Harbourmaster function for Port Taharoa.

KŌRERO WHAKATAKI | EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2. Participation in recreational boating has been growing year on year in the Waikato. We now have many congested waterways with numerous sports and water users in potential conflict with one another, as well as the general navigation safety issues that arise, particularly over summer where boating numbers increase significantly.

3. Operation Neptune is the summer on-water education and enforcement programme, run by the Maritime Services team with support from volunteers across the organisation. The focus of the programme is on increasing our presence on the water in key recreational boating areas over the peak summer period in order to maintain compliance with the region's navigation safety bylaw and reduce the risk of harm on the water.

4. Operation Neptune has been running for nine years and we strive to lift and refine our levels of service to the community year on year within available budget and support funding. This year the operation ran from boxing day through to 11 January with a total of thirty-nine staff involved on the roster. The team conducted 650 on-water inspections and identified 132 offences which resulted in the issuance of eighty-three infringement notices: four formal warnings. Thirty-seven offences were dealt with by a diversion scheme where the skipper completed a knowledge-based test after learning boating rules and safety information.

5. Maritime New Zealand supported the investment in delivering this boating safety initiative, with council successfully applying for and receiving funding from a contestable fund they manage. This support funding consisted of $11,370 to support our compliance activities in areas not previously patrolled, and $50,000 to support our education initiatives and diversion program.

Weather Events

6. The Waikato has been affected by several significant storms this season, but the recent storms have had less impact than ex-tropical cyclones Hale and Gabrielle in relation to our Maritime functions. The effects have been mitigated through careful planning (as a result of learning from previous large events) around the stock of items we carry that experience has shown are often lost during significant storms, as well as having staff trained and experienced in rapidly reinstating our channels and Aids to Navigation (AtoN's).

7. In response to the storms, the Maritime Services team has undertaken a range of physical response activities to ensure navigation safety and to restore access to our channels and

harbours after each event. These include on-water inspections to identify hazards, displaced moorings, and debris that is causing a navigational hazard.

8. The Maritime team are deployed to remove floating hazards where practicable, mark risks to navigation, and coordinate with contractors where specialist recovery or heavy lift support was required. The post storm work included re-securing or removing compromised vessels, responding to grounded or partially submerged vessels, and supporting clean-up operations.

Wrecks and abandoned vessels

9. In the Waikato Region we have more than eight hundred swing or pole moorings in our harbours, predominantly inside our zoned mooring areas. Swing moorings are a substantially less expensive method of storing vessels than Marinas and do not have the Marina requirements for insurance and maintenance.

10. As a result, we have large numbers of older inexpensive vessels that are deteriorating year on year and presenting a risk of sinking and creating navigation hazards or risk of oil spill. Often these older vessels are owned by people of limited means and who have unrealistic views of the vessels value, potential, or the costs involved in restoration.

11. Maritime Services has an ongoing project of work dubbed “War on Wrecks” where the most at risk vessels are identified and the owners (where known) are encouraged and supported to take action on their vessels. When these more passive methods are unsuccessful to achieve change, formal directions are given to the owners to take action.

12. Where the vessels are abandoned or ownership cannot be established, Council will follow legislative process to remove the vessel for destruction removing the risk to navigation and the environment.

13. The Maritime Services team has collaborated with owners on the improvement of numerous vessels reducing their risk and removing them from the priority list. Approximately ten vessels have been removed from the water by the owners for cleaning and repairs.

14. In the 2025/2026 financial year, twelve vessels have been removed from the water and disposed of. Council has born the costs of ten of these vessels with two being removed by the owners. The cost to Council has been approximately $150,800 which is a mixture of our proactive derelict vessel funding, and our contracted services funding for dealing with unexpected events such as the MV Gleaner detailed below.

15. The MV Gleaner sank next to the Thames wharf during the most recent storm which generated some media attention. The salvage operation to refloat the vessel cost approximately $42,000.

16. The MV Gleaner is now determined to be an abandoned and derelict vessel and work is underway to demolish and dispose of her which will cost approximately $27,000 to complete. This work is scheduled at the time of writing this report but included in the costs described.

Taharoa Offshore Terminal

17. In December 2025, WRC assumed responsibility for the Harbourmaster function at the Taharoa Offshore Terminal, referred to as Port Taharoa.

18. The transition of responsibility from Maritime New Zealand to WRC required significant preparation and the engagement of an experienced Marine consultant to assist with the completion of a formal Risk Assessment and the creation of the Taharoa Harbour Safety Management System.

19. The Regional Harbourmaster has assumed responsibility for ensuring Maritime Safety in the Harbour and is supported by an external contractor who is an experienced Marine Pilot and Mariner who provides back up Harbourmaster cover when the Regional Harbourmaster is unavailable and technical expertise as and when required.

20. The Regional Harbourmaster enjoys an excellent working relationship with the Taharoa Ironsands Ltd port management staff and the Chief Marine Pilot for Taharoa. This collaborative relationship meets the requirements of the Port and Harbour Marine Safety Code and embodies a culture of continuous improvement in safety and risk management at the Port.

21. Direct costs including Harbourmaster time, contractors' expenses, as well as the increased insurance requirements have been recovered from the port company.

TAUNAKITANGA KAIMAHI | STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

That the report *Maritime Services Update* (Environmental Performance Committee, 9 June 2026) be received.

HOROPAKI | BACKGROUND

22. The Maritime Services team differs to most teams within the Resource Use Directorate in that its operations are not directed by the Resource Management Act.

23. Council, through the Maritime Services team, has the legislative responsibility to ensure the region, with the exception of Lake Taupo, has navigable waterways and an operative navigation safety bylaw, as required under the Maritime Transport Act 1994.

24. This region has its own dedicated navigation safety bylaw[1] that allows for the implementation of rules and consequences to promote safe and navigable waterways.

25. Maritime New Zealand has engaged IPSOS to conduct recreational boating research through survey. The survey asks questions about recreational boat ownership, recreational boating information sources, and perceived recreational boating risks.

26. The IPSOS survey estimates more than 160,000 people participate in recreational boating in our region every year. A considerable proportion of people boating in our region are from Auckland, the Bay of Plenty and from further afield.

27. A key operational focus of the Maritime Services team is to conduct regular patrols of waterways to ensure compliance with the bylaw. A strong emphasis is put on education, and communications of safety messages through digital media, print media, and in person educational opportunities.

28. The region includes the Taharoa Offshore Terminal (Port Taharoa) and since December 2025, we have the Harbourmaster responsibility for Maritime safety of commercial shipping within the port limits.

[1] https://www.waikatoregion.govt.nz/assets/WRC/NavigationSafetyBylaw.pdf

Operation Neptune

29. Due to the significant influx of vessels and water users over the New Year period the maritime services team "gears up" over this period through a coordinated programme dubbed "Operation Neptune." This annual operation commences on Boxing Day and runs through to the end of the second weekend in January.

30. In a report to EPC in 2023, Maritime Services presented on the history, operational complexities, and logistical challenges that we face in running a high-profile boating safety campaign such as Operation Neptune.

31. The programme objectives are to

    - Deliver navigation safety education and advice; and intervene where unsafe behaviour is observed.
    - Take appropriate enforcement action and gather and record information for the consideration of future enforcement decisions.
    - Complete on-water compliance surveys to provide a measure of compliance with the Waikato Region Navigation Safety Bylaw.
    - Conduct initial action at any serious incident which may require further investigation.

32. This season's operation ran from 26 December 2025 through to 11 January 2026 and comprised of a total of thirty-nine staff including twenty-seven from wider Council teams and twelve staff from within the Maritime Services Team.

33. Face to face interactions form a large part of the summer education and compliance campaign. During Operation Neptune, the team connect with as wide an audience as possible to ensure that safety messages are being delivered. The programme targets all recreational boaties, both local to the Waikato, and visitors to the region. We interact with a wide range of vessels and focus on the geographical areas and vessel types most at risk.

34. During the operation, the team conducted sixty-five patrol deployments across coastal and inland waterways. We completed 650 on-water inspections. The team identified 132 offences which resulted in the issuance of eighty-three infringement notices; four formal warnings and thirty-seven offences were dealt with by a diversion scheme where they complete a knowledge-based test after learning boating rules and safety information.

35. During the operation there were several boating related incidents that required attendance. The team responded to a vessel rollover on the Tairua Bar, along with significant weather-related incidents such as two submerged vessels at Hahei Beach, and two vessels grounded in the Coromandel Harbour.

36. To support the investment in delivering this boating safety initiative, Council successfully applied for funding from a contestable fund managed by Maritime New Zealand. Maritime New Zealand provided funding consisting of $11,370 to support our compliance activities in areas not previously patrolled, and $50,000 to support our education initiatives and diversion program.

37. Operation Neptune continues to be one of most highly regarded boating safety campaigns in New Zealand and is commensurate with the high participation rates in boating activities in our region, along with the sobering downing statistics in the Waikato.

Significant weather events

38. Along with the seasonal influx of recreational vessels on the region's waterways, this summer was affected by significant weather events. There were storms over the peak summer period, and we have had a continuation of storm events since.

39. The waterways of this region have 1,023 individual Aids to Navigation (AtoNs) and related signage that provide guidance to boat skippers and other water users. These navigational aids are diverse and include such things as leading lights, outer channel markers, isolated danger markers, and wreck marks. The operation and maintenance of these AtoNs and signs are the responsibility of the Maritime Services Team.

40. During the 2023 summer season our region was impacted by the effect of ex tropical cyclones Gabrielle and Hale. During those storm events the Maritime Services team lost a significant number AtoNs and found that our reserve stocks of chain, buoys, and lights were insufficient to replace what was lost in a timely manner. Council incurred costs of approximately $45,000 to replace the AtoNs that were lost in those storms.

41. During the aftermath of the 2023 storms Council approved a budgetary increase in that financial year that allowed for the purchase of sufficient stock to hold that would allow for the repairs and maintenance of AtoNs after two potential significant weather events using stock on hand.

42. Despite the number of storms this season, the impact on our regions water ways over this 2025/2026 summer period has been less significant than 2023, and the stock on hand has been sufficient to cover any lost equipment.

43. The Maritime Services team has undertaken a range of physical response activities to ensure navigation safety and to restore access to our channels and harbours after each event. These include on-water inspections to identify hazards, displaced moorings, and debris that is causing a navigational hazard.

44. The Maritime team was deployed to remove floating hazards where practicable, mark risks to navigation, and coordinate with contractors where specialist recovery or heavy lift support was required. The post storm work included re-securing or removing compromised vessels, responding to grounded or partially submerged vessels, and supporting clean-up operations.

Wrecks and abandoned vessels

45. In 2025 the Waikato Regional Harbourmaster reported to Council on an ongoing risk within the region from a proliferation of deteriorating, derelict, and abandoned vessels on our moorings and in the harbours of the region.

46. Deteriorating or derelict vessels are the responsibility of the vessel owner and legislation gives power to the Harbourmaster to direct vessel to be made seaworthy or be removed from the water. Where owners do not to take appropriate action, council can remove the vessel and recover the costs associated with the vessels removal as a debt owed.

47. Many derelict vessels are owned by people who have limited resources, cognitive challenges, or the vessels are abandoned and ownership cannot be determined. On a case-by-case basis the team will determine the risk the vessel presents considering the costs of removing the vessel verses the significantly increased costs presented if the vessel were to sink.

48. For the 2025/2026-year Council approved a budgetary increase of $90,000 to our contracted services budget to allow Maritime Services to conduct proactive work dealing with derelict and abandoned vessels.

49. Maritime Services staff work with the vessel owners (where known) to get those owners to take action to reduce the risk. Early intervention resulted in owners taking responsibility and removing two vessels, the SV Group Therapy, and MV Nitros. The estimated cost for removal and disposal was $30,000 and this was born by the vessel owners.

50. Often these derelict vessels are owned by people with limited means and deteriorating cognitive abilities. These people are often dreaming of “doing the vessel up” in the future. They can be challenging to work with and do not comprehend the financial liability their vessel represents rather than the valuable asset they believe they own.

51. This financial year, the Maritime Services Team have achieved the following:

    (a) Ten vessels removed or disposed of across Thames, Whitianga, Tairua, Coromandel, Waitakaruru, Piako, and Opoutere.
    (b) These high-risk or abandoned vessels have been cleared from key navigation areas and harbours reducing ongoing navigation hazards, environmental risks, and public complaints.
    (c) We have demonstrated consistent regional presence and follow-through on abandoned vessels.

52. A breakdown of key costs (approximates).

    (a) MV Gleaner Salvage ($42,000)
    (b) MV Gleaner (Demolition and disposal ($28,000))
    (c) SV Sealady (Whitianga: $15,000)
    (d) Waitakaruru vessels x2 ($20,000)
    (e) Piako River vessel ($10,000)
    (f) MV Tawa (Tairua $12,000)
    (g) MV Liberty (Whitianga $7,800)
    (h) SV Blue Yacht (Thames Marina $10,000)
    (i) SV Soleglimt (Opoutere $5,000)
    (j) SV Mary Ann (Coromandel $1,000)

53. Derelict, abandoned, and unseaworthy vessels are a significant issue across all regions in New Zealand, with all regions reporting challenges of a similar nature. The “War on Wrecks” project continues to identify the highest risk vessels across the region and guides the Maritime Services Teams efforts towards reducing our exposure to risk of vessels sinking, oil spill incidents, and the increased cost involved in salvage of sunken vessels.

54. This appears to be an increasing risk across New Zealand as the vessels stored on moorings continue to age and deteriorate and the costs involved in ongoing maintenance increase with inflation.

Port of Taharoa

55. Taharoa Ironsands Limited (TIL) operates a large-scale iron ore mine at Taharoa. The mine runs a unique operation in that it pumps an iron ore slurry out to a single buoy mooring about 3.5km off the coast where it gets pumped into the holds of three very large bulk

carrying ships before the product is dewatered and the cargo is then shipped to Asian markets.

56. When this sand mining operation was set up in Taharoa, Waikato Regional Council did not have the capability to manage the Harbourmaster responsibilities, and the Harbourmaster delegation was given to Maritime New Zealand who have managed this responsibility for approximately 25 years.

57. Waikato Regional Council is a participant in the New Zealand Port and Harbour Marine Safety Code (Code), which is a voluntary code which sets out best practice safety management systems across the ports and harbours of New Zealand.

58. The Code sets out the safety management standards and systems that Council must follow to ensure best practice maritime safety management at Taharoa. The code requires Council to have a Harbour Safety Management System which will be subject to triannual peer review. The code demands continuous improvement and requires a close working relationship with the Port company to be effective.

59. TIL are also participants in the Code and have a requirement for a Port Safety Management System. TIL's Port Safety Management System and Council's Harbour Safety Management System must integrate and complement one another.

60. In preparation for assuming the responsibility for Taharoa WRC engaged a leading Marine consultant to complete an in-depth Harbour Risk Assessment and draft the Taharoa Harbour Safety Management System. These are the core documents on which the Harbourmaster activities at Taharoa are based.

61. In December 2025, the Harbourmaster function for the Port of Taharoa was relinquished by Maritime New Zealand to the Waikato Regional Council. The Regional Harbourmaster has assumed responsibility and is managing the risk on an ongoing basis.

62. The Regional Harbourmaster is supported in his role with the engagement of an experienced captain and marine pilot, as a contractor, who provides back up for Harbourmaster absences and provides technical expertise where required.

63. The Regional Harbourmaster enjoys a strong collegial relationship with the TIL Port operational team as well as the Chief Marine Pilot. There are regular ongoing meetings, joint risk assessments, joint training, incident debriefings, and free flowing communications between our two organisations.

64. A joint self-assessment of performance against the Code is due to be completed by the Regional Harbourmaster and TIL Port Management. This self-assessment is scheduled for late May 2026, and a formal Code peer review is scheduled during 2027.

65. There have been few incidents of note in the operation since December. One minor safety issue involved contact between the ship and the Single Buoy Mooring in January 2026.

66. The incident was professionally managed by the Chief Marine Pilot and Port Manager with the oversight of the Regional Harbourmaster. An investigation was conducted, where causation was ascertained. Training was appropriately implemented, learnings were disseminated to all Taharoa Pilots, new technical approach speeds were developed, and the

situation is scheduled to be replicated into the next Simulator Training session. An incident debrief was held by the Regional Harbourmaster in accordance with the requirements of the Code and the Safety Management Systems.

67. It is a unique situation for a Port to be owned and operated by only a single company. This means the Harbourmaster function is required for this single company. As such the Regional Harbourmaster and Contractor time for Taharoa is being recovered monthly, and the extra costs such as increased insurance have been recovered from TIL.

TE TAKE | ISSUE

68. The Code requires formal annual reporting to Council on WRC's performance against the Code. The annual joint self-assessment has not yet occurred at the time of drafting this report, but the findings will be commented on in the accompanying presentation delivered to the EPC meeting in June.

WHAKAKAPINGA | CONCLUSION

69. This report has provided the committee with a summary of the Operation Neptune programme's performance.

70. This report includes an update on the progress being made through the "War on Wrecks" project.

71. This report explains the Maritime Services response to, and preparedness for, recent and future significant weather events in the region.

72. This report provides an update on the new Harbourmaster function that has been adopted for the Taharoa Offshore Terminal (Port Taharoa).

NGĀ TOHUTORO | REFERENCES

73. Waikato Regional Council Navigation Safety Bylaw 2013(NavigationSafetyBylaw.pdf)

74. New Zealand Port and Harbour Marine Safety Code 2026 (nz-port-harbour-marine-safety-code-2026)

75. Maritime New Zealand IPSOS Recreational Boating research (Maritime NZ Recreational boating and marketing research)

76. Taharoa Harbour Safety Management System Taharoa Harbour Safety Management System (SMS) 2025.pdf.

77. Maritime New Zealand Recreational boating research (Recreational boating research - Maritime NZ)

ĀPITIHANGA | ATTACHMENTS

Nil

6.3 FARM PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

Rā | Date: **28 May 2026**

Kaituhi | Author: **Tracy Nelson, Manager - Primary Sector Support And Engagement**

Kaituku | Authoriser: **Brent Sinclair, Director, Resource Use**

TE ARONGA | PURPOSE

1. This report provides an update on activities undertaken in relation to the implementation of national regulations requiring freshwater farm plans (FW-FP), as well as rules included in Plan Change 1 (PC1) to the Waikato Regional Plan that will require most farmed land within the Waikato and Waipā catchments to be managed under a Farm Environment Plan (FEP).

KŌRERO WHAKATAHI | EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2. The national FW-FP regulations were formally paused in October 2024 while the Government undertakes a review of the FW-FP system. Ministers have made it clear though that they intend to retain a national farm planning system. The Regional sector is working with Government and industry to identify potential changes to the FW-FP system.
3. The Environment Court released its first interim decision for PC1 on 28 May 2025.
4. The Court in its decision recognised the *"immensely challenging task for WRC and all parties"* in addressing the various challenges associated with changes in national policy direction over the 12 years PC1 has been in motion. An example of this is national regulations for freshwater farm plans. The Court has adopted an approach where PC1 stands on its own (to the extent possible), which can be seen in the proposal to adopt key parts of the current regulations into PC1, whilst giving way to future regulations, to better support alignment.
5. The Environment Court released its second interim decision on 27 February 2026.
6. The Environment Court released a minute on 23 April 2026. It noted that the drafting of the final decision was well advanced, to the point where the substantive issues identified in the First and Second Interim Decisions have been decided on and no further deliberative decisions have yet to be made. The Court indicated that the decision was imminent but at the time of writing we still await the final decision.
7. In the absence of the decision, we are still able to continue to progress our Farm Environment Plan Implementation work programme, which includes training and guidance for farmers, their advisors, certifiers and Council Officers.
8. We are working on the digital systems that will be required to support Plan Change 1 implementation. The first phase is on track and focuses on the 'registration' component, the digital platform to receive farm plans and the calculators needed for farmers to identify their correct pathway.
9. We continue our work to build strong trusted relationships with industry stakeholders to ensure we are working together to support the rural sector.

TAUNAKITANGA KAIMAHI | STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

That the report *Farm Plan Implementation* (Environmental Performance Committee, 9 June 2026) be received.

HOROPAKI | BACKGROUND

10. The Committee will be aware of the background to this issue, as detailed in the regular previous reports to this Committee. In brief, both PC1, which covers the catchment of the Waikato and Waipā Rivers, and national regulations require rural landowners across the country to have a farm plan. It is currently estimated that approximately 7,700 farms in the Waikato Region will eventually be required to have a farm plan in place.

11. The Resource Management (Freshwater and Other Matters) Amendment Act passed into law in October of 2024. It included revocation of the Order outlining the application of Part 9A – Freshwater Farm Plans, effectively "pausing" FW-FPs while the Government undertakes a review of the overall resource management system.

12. The Resource Management (Consenting and Other System Changes) Amendment Act passed into law in August of 2025. It included changes to Part 9A – Freshwater Farm Plans which enable the approval (by the Minister) of industry organisations to provide certification and audit services for farmers, makes adjustments to the thresholds when a FW-FP is required, and introduces the possibility of "audit only" FW-FPs for some farming activities.

13. The New Zealand Government has granted Southland farmers an 18-month extension, moving the mandatory Freshwater Farm Plan deadline from May 2026 to November 2027, while the national rollout of these plans has been paused.

TE TAKE | ISSUE

14. The Environment Court in its first interim decision adopted many of the changes proposed in the WRC closing legal submission version of PC1. However, where the Court has not, it included directions to WRC to consult with other parties before responding to the Court.

15. The Curt has confirmed it requires no further information to inform its decision, and as such we now await the final decision.

16. The digital systems that will be required to support Plan Change 1 implementation are progressing well. The first phase is on track and focuses on the 'registration' component, the digital platform to receive farm plans and the calculators needed for farmers to identify their correct pathway.

17. We are working on information and guidance which will support landowners to meet their PC1 regulatory obligations.

18. We are undertaking a gap analysis of existing farm plans and the requirements of PC1. The information from this work will help identify opportunities to support farmers/growers and farm plan providers and ultimately provide the necessary confidence that these farm plans are capable of achieving the expectations in PC1.

19. With respect to the Government's FW-FP system, we continue to engage with the Government when requested as we await to see what changes result from its review. We

understand the intention of Government is that the FW-FP system plays a key role in the new resource management system.

20. We are continuing to collate catchment context as it is useful information for farmers when considering their farming practices. We have co-designed this information with end users to ensure it is useful and fit-for-purpose.

21. Certifiers and Auditors are key roles in both the national and regional farm environment plan systems to ensure farmers and growers are supported when identifying risks and appropriate mitigations. We have developed a process to ensure we have a trusted group of certifiers and auditors who are supported with sound guidance.

22. Our monthly email provides an update on our Farm Environment Plan work programme and other related activities. It reaches over 300 people.

23. Further, our Communications team has developed a plan to focus people's attention on solutions, unite them towards a common goal and leverage existing networks and ongoing engagement activities. We know that great work is already being done and we want to make sure no farmers or growers feel like they are doing this alone. We have committed to a simple, plain English approach to creating and sharing information and plan to workshop examples with councillors to ensure that 'plain' is plain enough.

WHAKAKAPINGA | CONCLUSION

24. We recognise the significant challenges currently facing the rural sector. We are working with our industry partners to identify the best ways we can support landowners to meet their regulatory obligations.

ĀPITIHANGA | ATTACHMENTS

Nil

6.4 REGIONAL CONSENTS UPDATE

Rā | Date: **27 March 2026**

Kaituhi | Author: **AnaMaria d'Aubert, Manager - Regional Consents**

Kaituku | Authoriser: **Brent Sinclair, Director, Resource Use**

TE ARONGA | PURPOSE

1. This report has two parts:
    i. It provides an overview of the resource consenting activities of the Regional Consents Section of the Resource Use Directorate (RUD) over the period 1 July 2025 to 30 April 2026.
    ii. It provides a very brief update on legislative changes relevant to resource consent processing.

KŌRERO WHAKATAHI | EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2. Part A provides information on the following resource consent services and activities:
    i. Resource consent applications received, and discount regulations applied
    ii. The number of resource consent applications processed externally
    iii. A summary of notified applications
    iv. A summary of applications subject to appeal and/or s357 objection processes
    v. An update on water consent applications and Waikato River catchment allocation; and
    vi. A summary of Fast Track Applications
3. Part B provides a very brief update on legislative changes relevant to resource consent processing.

TAUNAKITANGA KAIMAHI | STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

That the report *Regional Consents Update* (Environmental Performance Committee, 9 June 2026) be received.

RESOURCE CONSENT SERVICES AND ACTIVITIES

Applications Received and Discount Regulations

4. The Discount Regulations require consent authorities to provide a discount on administrative charges when a resource consent is not processed within relevant timeframes specified in the Resource Management Act (RMA). The discount applied is one percent per working day exceeding the relevant timeframe, up to a maximum of 50 percent.

5. For the year 1 July 2025 to 30 April 2026, 699 of 710 (99.98%) resource consent applications were processed in accordance with the RMA timeframes, leaving 11 applications that failed to meet the Discount Regulation requirements.
6. In addition to these 11, one application was subject to the queued priority process, so whilst the RMA timeframe was not met, this did not trigger the discount regulations (i.e. an application to take water where the application needed to be processed in priority order) and one application was issued prior to the expiry of existing consents (pursuant to section 7 of the discount regulations, no discount is required as consent was issued prior to the expiry of the existing consent).
7. Overall, the timeframe compliance with the discount regulations for the period - 1 July 2025 to 30 April 2026 was 99.98% compared against the annual plan target of 95%.

Resource Consent Applications Processed Externally

8. Contractors are regularly engaged to process resource consents when in-house staff are at capacity. In-house capacity is impacted when there are vacancies or when the volume of applications fluctuates. The Regional Consents section has 26 consent officers and over the past 6 months there have been a number of vacancies (x 5) and changes to staff.
9. For the period 1 July 2025 to 30 April 2026 (10 months), 49 contracts were in place with six different firms for processing resource consent applications (compared to 26 contracts being in place with six different firms over the same period the previous 24/25 year). The majority of applications with contractors relate to applications for land use disturbance and earthworks, followed by coastal permits.
10. In addition, external contractors are also engaged at times to provide technical assistance and advice on aspects of proposals where WRC does not have the relevant expertise in house, or that expertise is not able to provide the necessary advice within the statutory timeframes that apply under the RMA or the Fast Track Approvals Act.

Notified Applications

11. Resource consent applications can be limited or publicly notified under the RMA. There are currently nine applicants proceeding through a notified process:
    i. Limited Notified: Paddy Bull and Black & Bull (extension to marine farms); AGB Solutions Limited (waste oil recovery and processing); Graymont NZ Ltd (Oparure limestone quarry)
    ii. Publicly Notified: Enviro NZ Services (replace Hampton Downs landfill consents); Legal Shellfish Ltd (spat catching); Tahuna Aotea Moana Marine Farm Ltd (spat catching); MPDC (5 Wastewater treatment plants); TCDC (Matarangi WWTP)
    iii. Board of Inquiry: Global Contracting Solutions – Waste to Energy plant

Applications Subject to Appeal and Objection

12. Under the RMA resource consent applications can be subject to appeal or s357 objection proceedings. There are currently three applications subject to appeal, and three subject to objection:
    i. Appeals x 2: Taharoa Ironsands Ltd (central & southern blocks); Bartrom Trust (marine farm extension); Mainland Poultry Ltd (air discharge)
    ii. Objections x 3: Taharoa Ironsands Ltd (costs); Global Contracting Solutions (costs); Jones, Castle, Thomas (costs)

Water Consent Applications and Waikato River Catchment Allocation

Water Takes – Region wide

13. For the period 1 July 2025 to 30 April 2026, the total number of water take applications lodged (region wide) was 95. The total number of decisions made was 136. At 30 April 2026 there were 241 water take consents to process region-wide.

Water Takes - Waikato River Catchment and Deferral Queue

14. We are continuing to process the backlog of applications that were in the Waikato River Deferral Queue (i.e. applications lodged prior to 11 February 2021 in the Waikato River catchment). We have reduced this list by 26 applications since 1 July 2025 via granting of consent, or discussions with applicants to withdraw, and there are 89 applications remaining to process. For the whole Waikato catchment, there are a total of 157 applications to process, which includes applications received after 11 February 2021.

Waikato River Catchment Allocation

15. Available allocation in the Waikato River catchment has increased for both the Upper Waikato River catchment above Karapiro Dam and the Lower Waikato catchment at landward boundary of the coastal marine area, compared to 1 July 2025. There is allocation available across all months of the year within combined primary and secondary allocable flow.

REGION WIDE	
Water take applications to process (region wide)	241
Water take applications lodged since 1 July 2025 (region wide)	95
Decisions made since 1 July 2025 (region wide – granted or withdrawn)	126
DEFERRAL QUEUE	
Reduction in Waikato River Deferral Queue applications since 1 July 2024 (lodged pre- 11 February 2021)	26 89 remaining
WAIKATO RIVER CATCHMENT AVAILABLE ALLOCATION	
Available allocation in Waikato River catchment – at landward boundary of coastal marine area	3.02 m^3/s*
Available allocation in Waikato River catchment – at Karapiro Dam	1.69 m^3/s*
Available allocation in Waikato River catchment – at Huka Falls	0.08 m^3/s*

** Minimum available allocation, differs month by month*

Fast-Track Act Applications

16. The Fast Track Act 2024 (FTA) enables parties with applications on the Listed Projects pathway to lodge a substantive application within two years of acceptance onto the Listed Projects pathway. Those without an application on the Listed Projects pathways must first seek a Referral. Acceptance onto both the Referral and Listed Projects pathway is made by the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA). The EPA seeks input from a number of parties including the Waikato Regional Council before an application is accepted onto either pathway.

17. A summary of the Fast Track processes within the Waikato Region follows:

    i. Three applications have been granted under this Act these are:

        - The Waihi North Project is now underway but remains subject to a High Court Appeal by Forest and Bird to be heard later in the year. The appeal relates to the wording of

conditions as they relate to plans required to be provided as part of the overall project;

- The National Green Steel recycling plant at Hampton Downs has been granted; and
- The Ashbourne Solar Farms, Retirement Village and Residential Subdivision located in Matamata has been granted in part with the two Solar Farms and a reduced Residential Subdivision being approved.

ii. One substantive application is currently underway being the re-consenting of the Central and Southern Blocks at the ironsand mining operations in Taharoa.

iii. Since the last report there have been an additional four applications that have been accepted onto the Listed Pathway which we anticipate will result in a substantive application to be lodged at some stage.

iv. There are now five applications currently awaiting a decision on their application for Referral.

v. Staff are aware of at least five other applicants that will be seeking Referral for their projects onto the Listed Project pathway.

vi. Another application currently on the Listed Project pathway has been granted by WRC on a non-notified basis (Pepe Stream Bridge – NZTA).

18. In summary, there is currently one substantive application underway, a further 16 projects on the Listed Projects pathway, a further five projects seeking Referral and at least another five projects looking to seek a Referral via the FT process within the short term (1-2 years) along with any additional new projects as yet unknown.

LEGISLATIVE CHANGES RELEVANT TO RESOURCE CONSENT PROCESSING

19. The purpose of this section of the report is to inform the EPC of legislative changes that are expected to impact on the delivery of resource consent services.

20. A detailed overview of a range of legislative changes was provided in the March report to EPC. At the time of this report, implementation is ongoing in response to changes that came into effect late 2025 and early 2026. However, there is little to report on many of the items of change proposed as they are still in progress with government (new Bills, new National Direction instruments – National Policy Statements and Environmental Standards), or with the Environment Court (PC1).

21. We continue to track closely the progress of the more significant changes, replacement Bills to the RMA, along with transitional provisions, which are expected to be passed into law by September this year, and there may be more to report by the time of the next EPC.

WHAKAKAPINGA | CONCLUSION

22. This report summarises resource consenting activity within the Regional Consents Section of the Resource Use Directorate for the period 1 July 2025 to 30 April 2026.

23. This report also briefly comments on legislative changes impacting resource consent processing and services.

ĀPITIHANGA | ATTACHMENTS

Nil

6.5 REGIONAL PATTERNS IN HUMAN HEALTH RISKS

Rā | Date: **18 May 2026**

Kaituhi | Author: **Mike Scarsbrook, Manager - Environmental Science**

Kaituku | Authoriser: **Tracey May, Director, Science, Policy and Information**

TE ARONGA | PURPOSE

1. Provide the Committee with an overview of human health risks associated with regional patterns in air quality, contact recreation in freshwater and marine environments and drinking water quality.

KŌRERO WHAKATAKI | EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2. This report uses both recent and long-term data from Waikato Regional Council's State of the Environment monitoring programmes to provide a combined picture of common health risks across air, freshwater and marine domains.

Air Quality

3. Air quality in the region can be affected by several activities and sources including home heating, traffic, and industrial discharges. It is often worse in urban areas located inland where cold, calm conditions over wintertime can trap air pollutants.

4. The main air quality indicators we monitor include fine air borne particulate matter referred to as PM10 (particles less than 10 micrometres in size) and PM2.5 (particles less than 2.5 micrometres in size) and nitrogen dioxide (NO_2). Together, PM2.5 and NO_2 contribute to most air pollution health effects in NZ.

5. Air quality monitoring has been carried out in the Waikato region within designated airsheds by WRC since 1998. The following seven airsheds are currently monitored for PM10 and PM2.5: Taupō, Tokoroa, Te Kuiti, Putaruru, Hamilton, Morrinsville and Thames.

6. NO_2 monitoring is currently undertaken in Hamilton by WRC with additional long-term NO_2 monitoring undertaken by Waka Kotahi (with contributory funding from WRC) in Cambridge, Hamilton, Te Awamutu and Taupō.

7. Over the period 1998 to 2026, exceedances of the PM10 standard have been identified in Tokoroa, Taupō, Te Kuiti, Putaruru, Hamilton and Huntly. But only Tokoroa and Taupō are currently classified as being polluted airsheds based on the number of PM10 exceedances over the last five years.

8. Tokoroa, Taupō, Te Kuiti, Putaruru and Hamilton have also reported exceedances of the World Health Organisation(WHO) guidelines for PM2.5, whereas Hamilton, Cambridge, Te Awamutu and Taupō have reported exceedances of the WHO guidelines for NO2 at traffic monitoring sites.

9. Available evidence indicates either improving trends or no evidence of change for PM10 and PM2.5. Improvements are mainly attributed to reductions in emissions from home heating sources.

10. For NO_2, the evidence indicates improving trends at all traffic monitoring sites in Hamilton, Taupō and Te Awamutu with no evidence of change in Cambridge. Improvements are mainly attributed to changes in improved engine and fuel technology but the gradual transitioning to electric vehicles is anticipated to contribute more significantly to improvements in future.

11. Patterns of NO_2 exceedance across Hamilton are linked to busy road corridors and intersections. Our work highlights the need for good planning and zoning to ensure that vulnerable members of the population are adequately protected, and population growth and poor traffic planning doesn't increase health risks.

Contact Recreation

12. Over the 2025-2026 summer, Waikato Regional Council's recreational monitoring programme in fresh water (rivers and lakes), estuaries, and open coast beaches provided information to our communities on suitability for primary contact (swimming) and secondary contact (e.g., kayaking, boating, fishing).

13. Results this season show that open coast beaches, estuaries, Lake Taupō and Lake Puketirini were **suitable** for contact recreation most of the time. The Waikato River hydro lakes (from Taupō to Arapuni) and regional lakes were **unsuitable** for contact recreation most of the time, due to high levels of cyanobacteria. Regional rivers were **unsuitable** for contact recreation most of the time, due to high levels of the faecal indicator bacteria *E. coli*.

14. The long-term grades show that open coast beaches, Lake Taupō and Lake Puketirini have "good" or "excellent" water quality. Most sites along the Waikato River show "fair" water quality, whereas for other rivers, lakes and estuaries the water quality is mostly "poor".

15. Results are made available to the public on LAWA (https://www.lawa.org.nz/explore-data/swimming) and shared with Health New Zealand | Te Whatu Ora, iwi, community groups, and other relevant stakeholders.

16. Public health warnings are issued by Health New Zealand | Te Whatu Ora and are publicly available in the health alerts page (https://info.health.nz/news/health-alerts).

17. This summer, public health warnings were issued for lakes Ngāroto, Rotokauri, Kainui, and hydro lakes Arapuni, Maraetai and Ohakuri, due to high cyanobacteria levels. A bacterial health warning was placed on Lake Puketirini due to reports by the public of several users becoming unwell with gastroenteritis symptoms.

18. Following the significant weather events around the 13-16 February 2026, and the flooding in Waipā and Ōtorohanga districts, a health alert was placed on all Waikato streams, rivers, lakes, estuaries and coastal beaches affected by the severe weather events.

Drinking Water Quality

19. Groundwater and surface waters - including aquifers, rivers, streams, and lakes- are significant sources of drinking water in the Waikato region, supplying a large proportion of rural communities and contributing significantly to municipal supplies.

20. Nitrate is the most widespread contaminant affecting groundwater quality in Waikato. Under the New Zealand Drinking Water Standards, the maximum acceptable value (MAV) for nitrate is 11.3 mg/L as nitrate-nitrogen, set to protect against acute health effects such as methaemoglobinaemia (Blue Baby Syndrome) in infants.

21. 11% of our long-term groundwater monitoring sites have median nitrate concentrations exceeding the maximum acceptable value for drinking water.

22. Higher nitrate concentrations in groundwater are typically found in shallow, younger groundwater beneath intensively farmed lowland areas, particularly in Pukekohe, Hamilton Basin, Hauraki Plains, and the Waipā catchment, where land use is dominated by horticulture and dairy farming.

23. At a national scale, Waikato is identified as a region of "significant concern" for nitrate contamination in groundwater, with some rural drinking water supplies exceeding the MAV and many others approaching it. This is especially relevant because private bores and small rural supplies are not always routinely monitored, increasing potential exposure risk.

24. Arsenic in Waikato groundwater and surface water is another drinking water issue, although generally naturally derived rather than driven by human land use. Elevated arsenic concentrations are associated with geothermal systems in the Taupō volcanic zone.

25. The drinking water MAV for arsenic in New Zealand is 0.01 mg/L. Arsenic concentrations in raw water sources in the Waikato River system generally exceed drinking water standards. And median concentrations of arsenic in groundwater are over the maximum acceptable value for drinking water at 5.5% of groundwater SOE monitoring network sites in the Waikato.

26. Treated drinking water generally complies with standards, with treatment processes adjusted when elevated concentrations occur. Thus, arsenic presents a geographically constrained, geology-driven risk, unlike the widespread, land-use-driven nitrate issue.

27. Other risks to drinking water quality include microbial contamination and other chemicals (e.g. metals, pesticides and other emerging organic contaminants (EOCs)). In groundwater, these risks tend to be localised and higher in vulnerable areas where aquifers are shallow with little soil cover. A New Zealand first regional baseline survey of EOCs in the Waikato found the occurrence of these contaminants to be ubiquitous but generally at very low concentrations.

28. In surface water, the presence of cyanobacteria in lakes and slow-moving river sections can pose a risk to drinking water due to cyanotoxins.

29. Water quality in the Waikato exhibits clear regional patterns driven by natural variation and land use. Diffuse contamination from agriculture (especially nitrate) is the primary long-term risk to groundwater quality.

30. Overall, the evidence highlights the importance of land management, monitoring, and source protection in maintaining safe drinking water supplies across the region.

TAUNAKITANGA KAIMAHI | STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

That the report *Regional Patterns in Human Health Risks* (Environmental Performance Committee, 9 June 2026) be received.

HOROPAKI | BACKGROUND

31. The Environmental Monitoring and Environment Science Sections within Waikato Regional maintain extensive State of the Environment monitoring programmes across air, land and soil, freshwater and coastal/marine domains.

32. Monitoring and reporting focus on regional patterns in human health and ecosystem health outcomes and provides a robust evidence-base to enable sustainable use of natural resources.
33. In this report, environmental monitoring data relating to Air, Freshwater and Marine domains are presented to illustrate regional patterns in human health risks.

TE TAKE | ISSUE

Air quality across the Waikato

34. Air quality in the region can be affected by several activities and sources including home heating, traffic, and industrial discharges as well as sea spray, windborne dust, pollen and volcanic activity. It is also often worse in urban areas located inland where cold, calm conditions over wintertime can result in the formation of inversion layers that trap air pollutants down low where we breathe.
35. Regional councils have a statutory responsibility to monitor and manage air quality under the National Environmental Standards for Air Quality (NESAQ) which are mandatory environmental regulations made under the Resource Management Act, 1991.
36. The main air quality indicators monitored across the Waikato region (and NZ) include fine air borne particulate matter referred to as PM10 (particles less than 10 micrometres in size) and PM2.5 (particles less than 2.5 micrometres in size) and nitrogen dioxide (NO_2). The finer range of particles, PM2.5, provides better evidence of effects on human health. For example, PM2.5 has been shown to impact multiple negative health outcomes including; cardiovascular diseases, asthma, bronchitis, premature mortality and lung cancer. NO_2 is also an important indicator of air pollution exposure due to increasing epidemiological evidence of significant respiratory and cardiovascular health effects. Further to this, the World Health Organisation (WHO) recognises air pollution as the greatest environmental threat to health and well-being at the global scale (WHO, 2016).
37. The latest update of the Health and Air Pollution in NZ study (HAPINZ 3.0; Kuschel *et al.*, 2022) has identified a strong association between health impacts in NZ with exposure to PM2.5 from home heating and NO_2 from motor vehicles. Together, PM2.5 and NO_2 contribute to most air pollution health effects in NZ.
38. The NESAQ sets a maximum concentration limit for PM_{10} of 50 $\mu g/m^3$ as a 24-hour average with one allowable exceedance per 12-month period and a 1-hour average limit for NO_2 of 200 $\mu g/m^3$ with nine allowable exceedances per 12-month period.
39. There is currently no NZ based guideline or standard applicable to PM2.5 and consequently the WHO ambient air quality guidelines have been used for reporting of PM2.5 concentrations. The recently updated WHO guidelines include a 24-hour average guideline of 15 $\mu g/m^3$ and an annual average guideline of 5 $\mu g/m^3$ for PM2.5 and a 24-hour average guideline of 25 $\mu g/m^3$ and an annual average guideline of 10 $\mu g/m^3$ for NO_2.
40. Previously proposed amendments to the NESAQ to bring them into line with the WHO guidelines are currently being considered through the current RMA reform process.
41. Air quality monitoring has been carried out in the Waikato region within designated airsheds by WRC since 1998 with the objectives of:
    a) Determining compliance with national ambient air quality standards and guidelines;
    b) Identifying trends in ambient air quality and sources contributing to poor air quality; and
    c) Providing information to support the implementation of our regional plan and regional policies on air quality, including consent processing and consented and permitted activity compliance.

42. A total of 14 out of 20 gazetted airsheds[2] in the Waikato region have been monitored with the following seven airsheds currently monitored for PM_{10} and $PM_{2.5}$: Taupō, Tokoroa, Te Kuiti, Putaruru, Hamilton, Morrinsville and Thames.
43. NO_2 monitoring is currently undertaken in Hamilton by WRC with additional long-term NO_2 monitoring undertaken by Waka Kotahi (with contributory funding from WRC) in Cambridge, Hamilton, Te Awamutu and Taupō since 2007.
44. Over the period 1998 to 2026, exceedances of the 24-hour average PM_{10} NESAQ standard of 50 ug/m^3 have been identified in Tokoroa, Taupō, Te Kuiti, Putaruru, Hamilton and Huntly. But only Tokoroa and Taupō are currently classified under the NESAQ as being polluted based on the number of PM_{10} exceedances over the last five years.
45. Exceedances of the WHO daily and annual average guidelines for PM2.5 continue to be recorded in Tokoroa, Taupō, Te Kuiti, Putaruru and Hamilton.
46. Exceedances of the WHO daily and annual average guidelines for NO_2 continue to be recorded in Hamilton, Cambridge, Te Awamutu and Taupō at traffic monitoring sites.
47. Where there are sufficiently long enough datasets available, the evidence indicates either improving trends or no evidence of change for PM_{10} and $PM_{2.5}$. Improvements are mainly attributed to reductions in emissions from home heating sources. However, changes in meteorology (e.g. fewer nights with low temperatures coinciding with low windspeeds) are also likely to be contributing to observed improvements.
48. For NO_2, the evidence indicates improving trends at all traffic monitoring sites in Hamilton, Taupō and Te Awamutu with no evidence of change in Cambridge. Improvements are mainly attributed to changes in fuel specifications and improved engine technology but the gradual transitioning to electric vehicles is anticipated to contribute more significantly to improvements in future.
49. An investigation of spatial variation of PM2.5 across Tokoroa in 2020 indicates that concentrations are uniformly elevated (often well above the WHO guidelines) across residential areas over the winter period and that the monitoring data measured at WRC's single permanent air quality monitoring station in Tokoroa is representative of 24-hour exposure for residents.
50. Investigations into spatial variation of NO_2 across Hamilton indicates that while concentrations are likely to exceed the WHO guidelines in close proximity to busy road corridors and intersections, the concentrations drop off quickly with distance and that most residential areas will not be exposed to concentrations that exceed the guidelines. However, these investigations do inform the need for good planning and zoning to ensure that vulnerable members of the population are adequately protected, particularly the elderly and very young, e.g. ensuring early childhood education centres are located well back from busy roads. There is also potential for nitrogen dioxide concentrations to worsen in some locations as a result of population growth and poor traffic route planning.

Contact Recreation

51. The recreational monitoring programme runs from November to April for estuaries and open coast beaches, and for the Waikato River hydro lakes; and from December to March for regional rivers and lakes, including Lake Taupō. This programme assesses enterococci and E. coli, as indicators of faecal contamination, and cyanobacteria, as producers of cyanotoxins, that are among the most hazardous substances found in waterbodies.

[2] Huntly airshed is monitored by Genesis Energy as part of the consenting requirements for the operation of Huntly Power Station.

52. Council has carried out recreational water quality monitoring during the summer months since 1985. The number and location of the sampling sites have changed over the years, but efforts have been made to maintain monitoring at key sampling sites throughout the years. Currently it encompasses ca. 60 locations.

53. WRC staff are responsible for the sampling, except for Lake Taupō, where samples are collected by the Tūwharetoa Māori Trust Board (TMTB). In the Waikato River, in Hamilton, samples are collected and analysed by the Hamilton City Council (HCC).

54. Enterococci are measured in estuaries and open coast beaches and E. coli are measured in estuaries, rivers and lakes. Both are analysed by Hill Laboratories and reported as most probable number per 100 millilitres (MPN/100 mL). Enterococci are a better indicator for marine water and E. coli are a better indicator for fresh water. In estuaries, since sampling time cannot be standardised to salinity, we use a precautionary approach by assigning the worst result from the two indicators. The suitability for recreational contact is determined following the Microbiological Water Quality Guidelines for Marine and Freshwater Recreational Areas (MfE, 2003). A long-term grade is calculated for sites with five consecutive years of data and enough data points (> 50 samples), following the same guidelines.

55. Cyanobacteria are analysed by Earth Sciences New Zealand (ESNZ). Cyanobacteria are measured in regional lakes and in the hydro lakes in the Waikato River, but not in Lake Taupō, and reported as biovolume in cubic millimetres per litre (mm3/L). A precautionary approach is used for the lakes where both E. coli and cyanobacteria are monitored, by assigning the worst result from the two indicators. The suitability for recreational contact is determined following the Aotearoa New Zealand Guidelines for Cyanobacteria in Recreational Freshwaters (MfE, 2025). A long-term grade is calculated for sites with three years of data, and a minimum of 12 samples, following the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management 2020 (MfE, 2020).

56. Faecal bacteria (enterococci and E. coli) are used to indicate the levels of disease-causing organisms in the water, such as *Campylobacter*, *Giardia*, *Cryptosporidium* or *Salmonella*. The most common illness associated with contacting with unsuitable water is gastroenteritis, but respiratory illness and ear and skin infections may also occur. Cyanobacteria biovolume is used to indicate potential exposure to cyanotoxins, whose symptoms may include asthma attacks, and rapid onset of nausea and diarrhoea.

57. Results are made available to the public on LAWA https://www.lawa.org.nz/explore-data/swimming and shared with Health New Zealand | Te Whatu Ora, iwi, community groups, and other relevant stakeholders.

58. Public health warnings are issued by Health New Zealand | Te Whatu Ora and are publicly available in the health alerts page https://info.health.nz/news/health-alerts.

59. This summer, cyanobacteria health warnings were issued for lakes Ngāroto, Rotokauri, Kainui, and hydro lakes Arapuni, Maraetai and Ohakuri, due to cyanobacteria high levels. A bacterial health warning was placed on Lake Puketirini due to reports by the public of a number of users becoming unwell, with gastroenteritis symptoms. Following the significant weather events around the 13-16 February 2026, and the flooding in Waipā and Ōtorohanga districts, a health alert was placed on all Waikato streams, rivers, lakes, estuaries and coastal beaches affected by the severe weather events.

60. The Waikato River monitoring sites in Hamilton and the Lower Waikato were suitable for contact recreation most of the time. The long-term grade shows that half of the monitored sites have “fair” or “good” water quality, whereas the other half has “poor” water quality.
61. The Waikato River hydro lakes, in the Upper Waikato, were mostly unsuitable for recreation or caution was advised, due to the levels of cyanobacteria, except for Lake Karāpiro. The long-term grade shows the water quality is “fair” for Ohakuri, Maraetai and Arapuni and “poor” for Karāpiro.
62. Regional rivers were mostly unsuitable for contact recreation, except for Mapara Stream, in the Taupō catchment. The long-term grade shows the water quality is “poor”.
63. Regional lakes were mostly unsuitable for recreation or caution was advised, due to the levels of cyanobacteria, except for Lake Puketirini. The long-term grade shows that water quality is “good” for Lake Puketirini and “poor” for lakes Kainui, Rotokauri and Ngāroto.
64. Lake Taupō was mostly suitable for contact recreation. The long-term grade shows water quality at Kinloch and Mission Bay is “excellent”, at Stump Bay is “fair” and at Acacia Bay is “poor”.
65. Estuaries were suitable for contact recreation most of the time, except for Tairua Harbour, at Pepe Stream Bridge, where there were more frequent exceedances. Long-term grades showed water quality is “good” for Whangamatā Harbour, “fair” for Raglan Motor Camp and “poor” for the remaining sites.
66. Open coast beaches were suitable for contact recreation. The long-term grade shows all the monitored sites have “excellent” or “good” water quality.

Regional patterns of drinking water quality

67. Groundwater and surface waters - including aquifers, rivers, streams, and lakes- are significant sources of drinking water in the Waikato region, supplying a large proportion of rural communities and contributing significantly to municipal supplies. There are strong regional patterns in groundwater and surface water quality across the Waikato Region that reflect both natural variation and land use pressures.
68. National regulations, including the Drinking Water Standards and the National Environmental Standards for Sources of Human Drinking Water, require councils to protect source water and ensure supplies remain safe following treatment.
69. Nitrate is the most widespread contaminant affecting groundwater quality in Waikato and increasing total nitrogen trends are observed in many surface waters in the Waikato.
70. Regional Council monitoring shows that nitrate in groundwater is one of the most common contaminants approaching or exceeding drinking water limits in community supplies, alongside arsenic and boron. In contrast, nitrate concentrations in Waikato surface waters are typically below drinking water limits. Under the New Zealand Drinking Water Standards (New Zealand Government, 2022), the maximum acceptable value (MAV) for nitrate is 50 mg/L (11.3 mg/L as nitrate-nitrogen), set to protect against acute health effects such as methaemoglobinaemia in infants.
71. Higher nitrate concentrations in groundwater are typically found in intensively farmed lowland areas, particularly in Pukekohe, Hamilton Basin, Hauraki Plains, and the Waipā catchment, where land use is dominated by horticulture and dairy farming. These areas are characterised by younger, oxygenated groundwater that is more vulnerable to nitrate leaching from soils.

Median concentrations of nitrate in groundwater are over the maximum acceptable value for drinking water at 11% of our State of the Environment (SOE) monitoring network sites.

72. Lower nitrate concentrations in groundwater occur in forested or less intensively developed catchments, such as the Coromandel Peninsula and parts of the upper Waikato and Taupō catchments, where land use pressure is lower and groundwater can be older and more chemically reduced.
73. These patterns reflect the key drivers: land use intensity, groundwater age, and redox conditions. Shallow, recently recharged groundwater beneath pastoral and horticultural land is particularly susceptible to nitrate enrichment, whereas deeper or reducing aquifers often attenuate nitrate.
74. At a broader national scale, Waikato is identified as a region of "significant concern" for nitrate contamination in groundwater, with some rural drinking water supplies exceeding the MAV and many others approaching it. This is especially relevant because private bores and small rural supplies are not always routinely monitored, increasing potential exposure risk.
75. Arsenic in Waikato groundwater and surface water is generally naturally derived rather than driven by land use. Elevated arsenic concentrations are associated with geothermal systems in the Taupō volcanic zone and can influence both surface water and groundwater chemistr. Naturally elevated boron is also observed in groundwaters and surface waters in this area.
76. The drinking water MAV for arsenic in New Zealand is 0.01 mg/L. Arsenic concentrations in raw water sources in the Waikato River system generally exceed drinking water standards. And median concentrations of arsenic in groundwater are over the maximum acceptable value for drinking water at 5.5% of groundwater SOE monitoring network sites in the Waikato.
77. Treated drinking water generally complies with standards, with treatment processes adjusted when elevated concentrations occur. Thus, arsenic presents a geographically constrained, geogenic risk, unlike the widespread, land-use-driven nitrate issue.
78. Other risks to drinking water quality include microbial contamination and other chemicals (e.g. metals, pesticides and other emerging organic contaminants (EOCs)). In groundwater, these risks tend to be localised and higher in vulnerable areas where aquifers are shallow with little soil cover. A New Zealand first regional baseline survey of EOCs in the Waikato found the occurrence of these contaminants to be ubiquitous but generally at very low concentrations (Moreau et al., 2019).
79. In surface water, poorer water quality is more common in lowland pastoral catchments, where diffuse pollution dominates. Additionally, the presence of cyanobacteria in lakes and slow-moving river sections can pose a risk to drinking water due to cyanotoxins.
80. Water quality in the Waikato exhibits clear regional patterns driven by natural variation and land use. Diffuse contamination from agriculture (especially nitrate) is the primary long-term risk to groundwater quality. Nitrate contamination is most pronounced in intensively farmed catchments such as the Hamilton Basin, Hauraki, Pukekohe and Waipā, posing a widespread and ongoing drinking water risk, particularly for rural bore users. With regard to surface waters, upper catchments tend to have better water quality, while downstream, lowland, and lake environments experience degraded conditions due to cumulative land-use pressures.
81. In contrast to nitrogen, arsenic is a natural contaminant associated with geothermal areas, creating more localised challenges that are typically managed through treatment. Microbial contamination is a higher risk in surface waters than in groundwaters, and algal toxins can pose an additional risk in lakes.
82. Overall, the evidence highlights the importance of land management, monitoring, and source protection in maintaining safe drinking water supplies across the region.

ĒTAHI ATU TAKE | OTHER MATTERS

83. The State of the Environment monitoring programmes often concentrate workloads in summertime (e.g. sampling of river ecology, contact recreation programmes). We rely heavily on summer students employed over the summer to assist with this sampling. For many of these students, the experience gained from working with our teams gives them a great start to their careers. There are also multiple examples of the best summer students moving into full-time roles in WRC as these become available. A real win-win situation.

84. Due to the extensive cyanobacteria blooms in the Waikato River hydro lakes, the Upper Waikato Algal Blooms Working Group has been convened, composed of the Waikato Regional Council, Waikato River Authority, Raukawa, Ngāti Tahu - Ngāti Whaoa Rūnanga Trust, Te Arawa River Iwi Trust (TARIT), Tūwharetoa Māori Trust Board, Taupō District Council, South Waikato District Council, Waipā District Council, Let's Be Clear Trust, Mercury Energy, Dairy NZ (and others to come). The group has been meeting every three months to discuss the best approach for monitoring, managing and mitigating the impacts of algal blooms in the Upper Waikato.

WHAKAKAPINGA | CONCLUSION

85. Air Quality is improving in most towns across the Waikato. However, WHO air quality guidelines continue to be exceeded in many locations, particularly in wintertime in urban areas like Tokoroa where woodburners are prevalent and in locations close to busy traffic routes in our larger urban areas like Hamilton.

86. We are continuously looking for ways to reduce the time it takes for water quality results to be available to partner agencies and the community, decreasing the need for reactive monitoring. This year we started to report cyanobacteria levels on LAWA based on field sensors, a technology that has advanced rapidly in recent years.

87. In collaboration with Health New Zealand | Te Whatu Ora we are working on multiple approaches to improve the public's ability to evaluate if waterbodies are safe to enter. This is based on increased media content, permanent precautionary signs at swimming locations, expanding proactive use of social media and exploring education initiatives involving schools.

NGĀ TOHUTORO | REFERENCES

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ĀPITIHANGA | ATTACHMENTS

Nil

6.6 MUNICIPAL WASTEWATER COMPLIANCE UPDATE

Rā | Date: **28 May 2026**

Kaituhi | Author: **Alexia Saint-Macary, Team Leader - Consents Monitoring**

Kaituku | Authoriser: **Brent Sinclair, Director, Resource Use**

TE ARONGA | PURPOSE

1. The purpose of this report is to update the Environment Performance Committee on the current compliance status of municipal wastewater treatment plants and associated conveyance networks within the Waikato Region. This report also provides commentary on the transition to the two new Council Controlled Organisations (CCOs), Waikato Waters and IAWAI, that will be in future service the needs of most Territorial Authorities within the region.

KŌRERO WHAKATAKI | EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2. Waikato Regional Council (WRC) is the regulating authority for the compliance, monitoring, and enforcement of discharges from Municipal Wastewater Treatment Plants (MWWTPs) authorised via resource consents issued under the Resource Management Act.
3. The water and wastewater services industry is in a state of flux with legislative changes, regulatory reform, and structural delivery models changing rapidly.
4. The provision of most wastewater services in the Waikato region will be transitioning from District and City Councils into new delivery entities between July 2026 and July 2027.
5. WRC monitors and reports on compliance with most MWWTPs every year. This monitoring has seen a general improving trend across the sector in the last three years, whilst seeing an increase in sites achieving full compliance status and a reduction in sites identified with to have moderate or significant non-compliance (defined as where there is actual or potential risk of moderate or significant adverse environmental effects).
6. Pond based MWWTPs predominate in the Waikato Region and are the focus for planned and current investment programs by Councils. Many have been earmarked for decommissioning (linking to larger, more capable plants) with others seeing significant upgrades underway or programmed into Long Term Plan (LTP) over the coming couple of years.
7. There are 22 Abatement Notices in place related to MWWTPs in the region, typically issued following identified non-compliance with resource consents. The majority of these notices will no longer be legally enforceable once assets are transferred to the new entities.
8. WRC staff have decided not to re-issue abatement notices for sites that are transferring into Waikato Waters or IAWAI ownership on 1 July 2026, at this time. Other Abatement Notices remain legally in effect.

TAUNAKITANGA KAIMAHI | STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

That the report *Municipal Wastewater Compliance Update* (Environmental Performance Committee, 9 June 2026) be received.

HOROPAKI | BACKGROUND

9. WRC is the regulating authority for the compliance, monitoring, and enforcement of discharges authorised via resource consents issued under the Resource Management Act, including those from MWWTPs. The Waikato Region has 11 local authorities that own MWWTPs and associated resource consents who collectively manage 53 MWWTPs across the region.

10. Each of these serve their respective communities and are funded by their local ratepayer base. This is the largest number of such authorities in any single region in the country.

11. Of the 53 MWWTPs, eight had consents that had expired as at August 2025 but continue to operate under section 124 of the Resource Management Act (RMA). These consent expiry dates have since been extended to 26 August 2028 under the Local Government (Water Services) (Repeals and Amendments) Act 2025.

12. Twelve plants with consents previously due to expire between 17 December 2025 and 31 December 2027 now have extended expiry dates of 31 December 2027, in accordance with the Resource Management (Consent Duration) Amendment Act 2025.

13. There are currently 10 consent applications being processed by WRC, with proposed expiry dates extending to either the end of 2027 or August 2028. Of these, four applications are well advanced and in the final stages of processing, four are progressing at various intermediate stages, and two remain in the early stages.

14. Several councils have indicated they may seek to amend existing applications lodged with Council to align with national Wastewater Environmental Performance Standards. The industry nationally, and regionally, is in a state of flux with both Resource Management reform and water services reform driving a complex environment of change for operators to navigate.

15. Under the governments' Local Water Done Well (LWDW) framework, most of the territorial authorities in this region are working towards a new model of wastewater delivery through Council-Controlled Organisations (CCO's). More information can be found here. Waikato water services delivery model | Waikato Water Done Well.

16. **Table 1** below sets out the existing model for water and wastewater services delivery in the region and maps to the future entity that will be the owner and operator of the assets.

17. While the majority of Councils will be transferring assets to the new CCOs (or continuing existing arrangements) from the 1 July 2026, Matamata Piako District Council, Otorohanga District Council, and Hauraki District Council are joining Waikato Waters Limited on 1 October 2026 and July 2027 respectively.

Table 1: Summary of existing and proposed public wastewater and water services delivery models in the Waikato Region.

Current Entity	Future Entity
Waitomo District Council	Waikato Waters Limited
Waipā District Council	
South Waikato District Council	
Matamata Piako District Council (MPDC)	
Otorohanga District Council	
Hauraki District Council	
Taupō District Council	
Waikato District Council	IAWAI
Hamilton City Council	
Thames Coromandel District Council	Thames Coromandel District Council
Auckland Council (Watercare)	Auckland Council (Watercare)

18. In addition to the operating model changes through LWDW, Taumata Arowai has also developed and released wastewater standards which aim to simplify the treatment standards for MWWTPs depending on the nature of the receiving environment for the discharge.

19. Regular reporting specifically on three waters compliance was reported to this committee between 2019 and 2022, at the request of the Committee.

20. This report has been brought to satisfy a request by the Committee for a current update. Moving forward, it is recommended that EPC be regularly updated, in particular given the changes outlined. Given the annual compliance reporting cycle of wastewater operations it would be efficient for this reporting to be undertaken annually at a similar time.

TE TAKE | ISSUE

21. WRC monitors and reports on most MWWTPs every year. **Figure 1** below shows the overall compliance status for MWWTPs in the Waikato Region over the past few years. This shows a general overall improvement trend across the sector, an increase in sites achieving full compliance and a reduction in sites operating with moderate or significant Non-Compliance.

22. This trend is anticipated, based on monitoring to date for the 2025-26 period, to continue with a reduction in significantly non-complying MWWTPs, due to a number of upgraded plants being commissioned during the period.

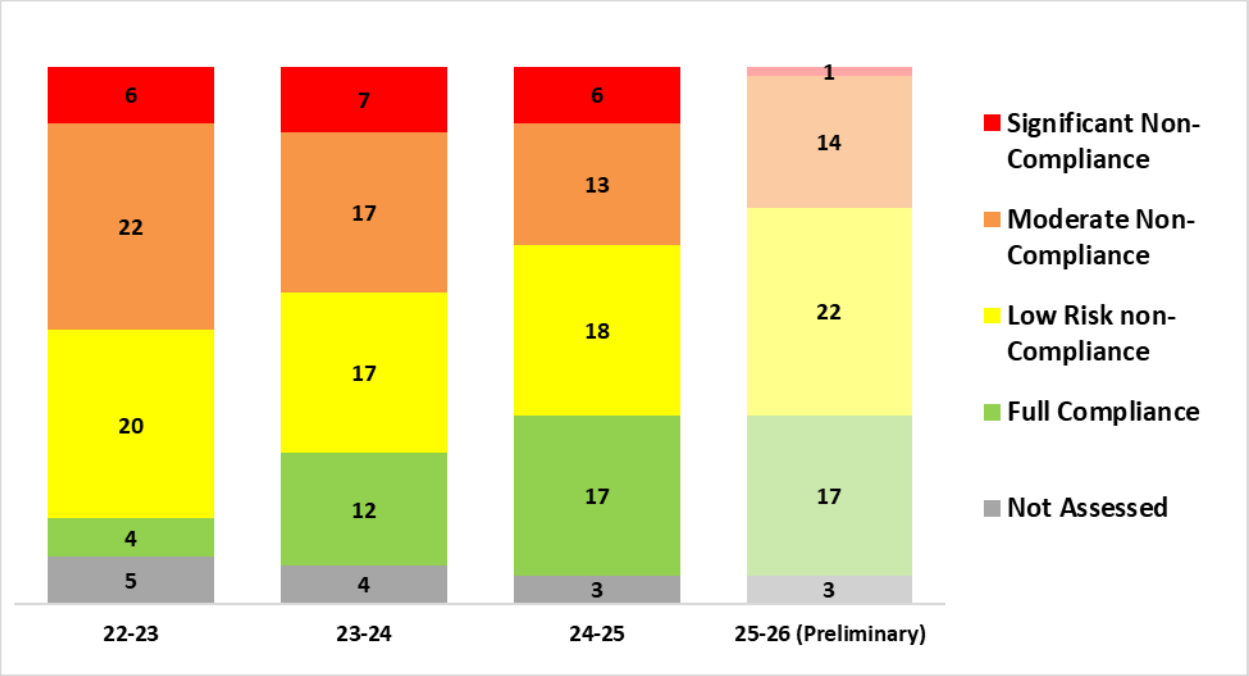

Figure 1: Overall compliance gradings for MWWTP in the Waikato region from 2022-23 to 2024-25 and preliminary results for 2025-26.

23. WRC staff recently completed a report on wastewater non-compliance in the region for Taumata Arowai, the national water services regulator. The report set out that more than 3200 compliance assessments had been made against individual conditions in resource consents over the last 3 years, making it one of the most closely monitored activities in the region.

24. Of these assessments, 18.9% were identified as non-complying: with 12.5% assessed as low risk non-compliance; 5% as moderate non-compliance; and 1% as significant non-compliance, as defined by the Ministry for the Environment compliance grading framework. All of the significant non-compliance assessments related to 12 MWWTPs that have been subject to recent formal enforcement action, or are subject to existing abatement notices, or have since returned to compliant levels. Nine of those significantly non-complying MWWTPs have, or are, in the process of undergoing major upgrades that are anticipated to achieve full compliance.

25. Pond based MWWTPs predominate in the Waikato Region and are the focus for planned and current investment programs with many being earmarked for decommissioning (linking to larger, more capable plants) through to significant upgrades underway or programmed into LTP decision making for the coming couple of years.

26. In particular, there have been eight major upgrades to plants commissioned during the request period, three upgrades are underway with commissioning planned for mid-2026, two have funding secured for major upgrades commencing in the next 12 months, one plant has been decommissioned, and a further four are planned to be decommissioned in the next 24 months with funding secured (see **Table 2**).

Table 2: Summary of wastewater treatment plant upgrade and decommissioning activity in the Waikato Region during the request period (1 July 2024 to 15 May 2026).

Major Upgrade Completed	Major Upgrade underway	Major Upgrade Planned (LTP)	Decommissioned (piped to other MWWTP)
Te Kauwhata	Matamata	Ngāruawāhia	Waihou (June 2025)
Meremere	Paeroa	Huntly	Kerepehi (Planned)
Raglan	Tokoroa		Waitakaruru (Planned)
Cambridge	Whiritoa		Turua (Planned)
Kinloch			Ngātea (Planned)
Waihi			
Pukekohe-Tuakau			

27. Abatement Notices have been issued to Councils in relation to non-compliances identified at the Otorohanga, Raglan, Te Kuiti, Ngāruawāhia, Waihou, Taupō, Piopio, and Benneydale MWWTPs during the last three years. It is important to note that, generally, Abatement Notices are not time bound, there are existing Abatement Notices that were issued more historically that remain in effect to manage compliance on an on-going basis.

28. There are a total of 21 Abatement Notices in place relating to the MWWTP and network incidents in the region, specifically issued following identified non-compliance with Resource Consents at the following MWWTPs:

- Waikato DC - Ngāruawāhia
- Waikato DC - Port Waikato
- Waikato DC - Te Kauwhata
- Waikato DC - Raglan
- Hauraki DC - Ngātea
- Hauraki DC - Paeroa (x3)
- Hauraki DC – Whiritoa (x2)
- Hauraki DC - Waihi
- Thames-Coromandel DC - Coromandel
- Taupō DC - Taupō (x2, one issued July 2025)
- South Waikato DC - Tokoroa (x2)
- Waipā DC - Te Awamutu
- Waitomo DC - Te Kuiti
- Waitomo DC - Benneydale (issued May 2026)
- Waitomo DC - Piopio (issued May 2026)
- Matamata-Piako DC - Waihou
- Otorohanga DC - Otorohanga

29. These Abatement Notices have been served to the local authorities currently responsible for the management of MWWTPs. Where assets are to be transferred to a new CCO, and they will no longer hold legal ownership of the wastewater assets in question after 1 July 2026, or at their date of future transfer, we have considered options for how to treat the risk that these notices are designed to manage.

30. Abatement notices under the RMA tend to be issued when there has been non-compliance of some scale, and the regulator believes there is a real risk of further non-

compliance. Any non-compliance poses a risk to the environment. In some instances, we expect that the risks identified by current notices will remain post new ownership.

31. Though it would be justifiable to issue 'fresh' notices to the new owning entity we appreciate that a series of abatement notices may cause an unhelpful distraction in the very early days of taking over these assets.

32. Accordingly, we have reached the decision to not re-issue abatement notices for sites that are transferring into Waikato Waters or IAWAI ownership on 1 July 2026, at this time. All other Abatement Notices remain legally in effect.

33. Networks and pumpstations are not consented in the Waikato Region. The municipal wastewater networks can be many kilometres of infrastructure that generally do not fall under a Resource Consent but can often be the subject of unauthorised discharges into the environment (Table 3).

Table 3: Summary of unauthorised discharges from municipal wastewater networks and resulting formal enforcement actions in the Waikato Region during the request period (1 July 2022 to 30 June 2025).

Entity District/	Unauthorised Discharges from Wastewater Networks
Waikato District Council	11
Hauraki District Council	6
Hamilton City Council	123
Waitomo District Council	14
Taupō District Council	83
Thames-Coromandel District Council	69
Matamata-Piako District Council	27
Waipā District Council	3
Otorohanga District Council	1
South Waikato District Council	6

34. Territorial Authorities are not required to notify WRC of unauthorised wastewater discharges from their networks. WRC has invested significant resources in fostering closer working relationships with territorial authorities across the region, with the expectation that discharges and any mitigation actions will be routinely reported. However, this practice is not consistently followed by all authorities, and WRC may only become aware of unauthorised network discharges through public complaints.

35. Every wastewater discharge notification and complaint received by WRC is recorded and responded to using a risk-based approach to environmental effects. Each case is investigated and resolved in accordance with WRC's enforcement policy, which applies the full range of enforcement tools and outcomes. These include no further action, education, formal warnings, infringement notices, abatement notices, and prosecutions. No further action may be taken where a discharge is minor in nature or where a statutory defence is available to the responsible party.

36. Over 75% of these unconsented notifications are made after the discharge has occurred and WRC's ability to capture evidence may be limited.

37. A significant proportion of these unconsented wastewater discharge notifications relate to incidents involving very low volumes discharged to land only and/or events beyond the

control of the territorial authority. In such cases, the incidents were appropriately managed and responded to, and a statutory defence under section 341 of the Resource Management Act 1991 has generally been available. Where discharges are minor in nature, WRC has adopted an educational approach, including providing recommendations for improvement where appropriate.

38. WRC has taken action in the past against water service entities for unlawful discharges of wastewater to the environment, including for both incident/event-based discharges as well as for systemic failure to comply with resource consent requirements.

39. This includes three separate prosecutions against Matamata-Piako District Council and Hamilton City Council related to municipal wastewater discharges in 2024 (MPDC) and 2022 (MPDC) and 2020 (HCC).

WHAKAKAPINGA | CONCLUSION

40. This report has presented the current compliance status for MWWTP and associated networks in the Waikato Region.

NGĀ TOHUTORO | REFERENCES

Nil

ĀPITIHANGA | ATTACHMENTS

Nil

7 PUBLIC EXCLUDED ITEMS

RESOLUTION TO EXCLUDE THE PUBLIC

HE TŪTOHUNGA | RECOMMENDATION:

1. That in accordance with section 48(1) of the *Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987* (Act) and the interests protected by section 6 or 7 of that Act, the public is excluded from the following parts of this meeting. The general subject of the matters to be considered while the public is excluded, the reason for passing this resolution in relation to each matter, and the specific grounds for excluding the public are set out below:

Meeting item no. and subject	Grounds for excluding the public	Reason for excluding the public
7.1 - Update on Prosecutions - June 2026	s6(c) of the Act - To avoid prejudice the maintenance of the law, including the prevention, investigation, and detection of offences, and the right to a fair trial s7(2)(a) of the Act - To protect the privacy of natural persons, including that of deceased natural persons	section 48(1)(a)(i) of the Act - the public conduct of the relevant part of the proceedings of the meeting would be likely to result in the disclosure of information for which good reason for withholding would exist under section 6 or section 7

8 KARAKIA WHAKAMUTUNGA

Unuhia, unuhia	**Draw on, draw on,**
Unuhia mai te uru tapu nui	**Draw on to the supreme sacredness**
kia wātea, kia māmā,	**To clear, to free**
te ngākau, te tinana, te hinengaro,	**our heart, body and soul**
i te ara takatū	**Our pathway prepared**
Koia rā e Rongo	**Lo, there is peace**
e whakairia ake ki runga	**suspended high above**
kia tina! TINA!	**manifest!**
Haumi ē, hui ē, TĀIKI ē!	**draw together!**
	Affirm!